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**Cc:** [Gross, Bonnie](#)  
**Subject:** NRCC Desk Lessons Learned  
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**Attachments:** [NRCC ESF10 Desk Harvey LL WDS 9-19-17.docx](#)

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Hi Tito,

Attached you'll find my lessons learned and recommendations from my experiences staffing the NRCC ESF10 Desk on September 1, 2, 3 & 4. It was a challenge but I was happy to do it and would volunteer again (if my boss lets me out of the Region!).

I tried to keep it very brief. If you need more information I'm happy to provide it. If you have questions, please call. I hope this is helpful.

Thanks Bill

Subject: Lessons learned from NRCC deployment for the Hurricane Harvey

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To: Gilberto Irizarry, Director  
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The following are my observations and suggestions (lessons learned) based upon my experiences staffing the ESF10 Desk at the FEMA National Response Coordination Center during the Hurricane Harvey response on September 1, 2, 3 and 4, 2017.

Before I get to lessons learned, I want to acknowledge five people who provided invaluable support to me during the NRCC assignment. I couldn't have done the job without their help. The five are: PO Justin Hoffer, USCG; Lt. Meagan Bowis, USCG; OSC Steve Mason, R6; Andrew Waite, R6 Water Program; and OSC Steve Touw, R2.

#### **Experiences & Lessons Learned:**

**Situational Awareness** – I began my shift on 9/1 with only a little more knowledge of the ESF10 Harvey response than what I was seeing on TV. I didn't know anything about EPA's role in the Arkema situation and nothing specific with respect to EPA's activities with respect to DW and WW facilities. By the second day, I was reaching out to Steve Mason in R6 for the critical information requests. He was a great help. He put me in touch with Andrew Waite in R6 Water office. But situational awareness remained a significant challenge all four days. We often learned of EPA activities from others at the NRCC and it was often inaccurate.

**NRCC Battle Rhythm** – The day I arrived, I was unfamiliar with NRCC daily operations schedule and what was expected of EPA. I was unprepared for the Senior Leadership VTC. I was not aware that I was expected to brief the FEMA administrator and a national video conference including the White House.

**EPA Harvey IMT SitRep & IAP** – On 9/2, Steve Touw pulled details of EPA/ESF10 activities directly from the EPA Harvey IMT IAP and & SitRep from Response.EPA for the NRCC National SitRep. The EPA IAP and SitRep are ready sources of great information that doesn't require additional effort from the Region. However, they were posted too late on the 9/3 and 9/4 to help.

#### **Recommendations:**

- I. **Situational Awareness:** There are several good/simple ways to improve situational awareness at the ESF10 Desk.
  - a. **Management Reports & Spot Reports.** The ESF10 desk should be on the mailing list for HQ EOC "Management Reports" and "Spot Reports."
  - b. **EPA ESF10 IMT SitReps and IAP.** If the EPA ESF10 IMT SitReps and IAPs are timely posted on Response.EPA, the ESF10 Desk can pull much of the information needed for the NRCC SitRep directly from Response.EPA.

- c. **Regional Calls & RM calls.** Include ESF10 desk personnel on incident specific Regional calls and RM calls this will help with information on hot-issues.
- d. **Direct link to Region.** The Region should assign a POC for the NRCC ESF10 desk. It could be through the Regional EOC, at the ESF10 desk at RRCC and or JFO or it could be through the LNO at the ESF10 IMT. As noted, I was only able to get timely information through POCs in Region for significant issues.
- e. **Special Issues.** Over four days there were only three recurring hot issues that NRCC wanted frequent real-time updates for: the Arkema Site, Impacted Superfund Sites, and the Beaumont drinking water plant (with DW and WW facilities in general being a related fourth). If the Region is aware of the hot issues in the NRCC, it can update the ESF 10 desk directly.

## II. NRCC Battle Rhythm & Staffing:

- a. **Battle Rhythm Cheat Sheet.** For new ESF10 desk officers It would be great to have a one- or two-page cheat sheet listing the NRCC schedule of meetings, reports, deadlines and a brief discussion of the EPA/ESF10 responsibilities for each event. At the very least, replacements should know when they are expected to brief the Federal interagency.
- b. **Staffing.** As far as I was aware, EPA was the only agency at the NRCC with only one representative during the day shift. Most had three or more representatives. Without the USCG, I couldn't have done the WebEOC updates and the other ESF10 desk duties. Between 8am and 3pm, it was non-stop, head-spinning request upon request making it even more difficult to gain situational awareness. It would have been a real boon to have another EPA representative at the NRCC to support the day shift. I recommend a second person start at 1 to 2 hours before the night shift ends to get situational awareness and transitional information from the night shift. They probably would only need to work until 2:30 or 3pm when the NRCC SitRep update is completed.

## III. NIMS/ICS:

- a. **Level 1 Disaster** – Recently FEMA changed its disaster response management procedures. Now for a Level 1 Disaster, the NRCC assumes leadership for Federal disaster response support until the JFO is fully operational and assumes incident control. However, at EPA, the Region retains primary leadership for EPA response activities under most circumstances. For a Level 1 Disaster, the NRCC essentially replaces the RRCC leadership. EPA should consider where the NRCC ESF10 desk should report to during a FEMA declared Level 1 Disaster. Should it report to EPA HQ or directly to the Region? In any event, the ESF10 desk needs much better situational awareness for a Level 1 Disaster.